

2010

## The Concord, 25 March 2010

Luther Seminary

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/student\\_newspapers](http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/student_newspapers)

---

### Recommended Citation

Seminary, Luther, "The Concord, 25 March 2010" (2010). *Student Newspapers*. 50.  
[http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/student\\_newspapers/50](http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/student_newspapers/50)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives & Special Collections at Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Newspapers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. For more information, please contact [tracy.iwaskow@gmail.com](mailto:tracy.iwaskow@gmail.com), [mteske@luthersem.edu](mailto:mteske@luthersem.edu).



March 25, 2010 • Volume 39, Issue 5

# Concord



## In this issue

- Pondering Johnny Cash . . . . . 4
- Military mindedness . . . . . 5
- Tribute to the TV series . . . . . 7-11



# Letter from the editor

By Nicholas Weber  
Concord Editor-in-Chief

Let me begin with the obvious: Being lost is not fun. There are lots of opportunities to get lost in seminary: theologically, spiritually, vocationally and so on. I have frequently heard people talk about being lost here. Our workloads seem overwhelming, and, if the number of submissions to the *Concord* are any indication, we're so busy with the school and life that we don't have time for anything else. Add to that the continuing discernment process and the perpetual cycle of self- and external evaluation, and our busyness just increases and increases.

Feeling lost in the process is nothing new. Many of our predecessors tell similar stories of struggle in seminary, and many others have felt lost as well. It goes even further back than that: Look at Elijah. The most successful event of his ministry career had occurred—the showdown with the Baal prophets in which he demonstrated that the Lord, not Baal, was God. After this event, with God lighting up his altar like a pyrotechnics display, you would expect Elijah to be elated, but instead he runs south and hides in a cave.

So if burnout and feeling lost have happened before, what is there to help or encourage us now? There are no easy answers; obviously God is here, but what do we do when God feels distant? Unfortunately, as with a certain iconic television program (see pages 7-11), we are at times left with more questions than answers. However, we must keep in mind that God has given us answers about whose we are and what that means: We are Christ's and are beloved children of God. Our hope is not based on our feelings but on what we know about God through Jesus.

The "clergy castaways" on this month's cover photo by Staff Photographer Amber Sue Marten are, from left, Hannah Johnson, Mollie Dvorak, Andy Behrendt, Brian Julin-McCleary, Laura Aase (all M.Div. seniors) and Anna Rudberg (Lutheran-year student). The canine castaway on the far left is Moses Maas.

Letters from Paul

## On becoming un-lost

By Paul Harrington  
Seminary pastor

Let me begin by offering a heartfelt word of thanks to all of you who have welcomed me so warmly into the seminary community. In some ways, it almost feels like a homecoming as I discover that I know more staff, faculty and students than I first realized. I am also aware that these have been difficult days for some of you, and I truly hope I can be, at least in some small measure, a healing presence. Please know that I am here to serve you in any way that I can.

The theme of this issue, as you may know, has something to do with being lost, and whatever lessons one may have derived from the TV series of the same name. I have to confess that I have never watched more than 30 minutes of *Lost* since it first aired. But what I would like to share with you are some things on how to become "un-lost" in today's crazy world.

Some weeks ago, my wife and I rented the movie *Into the Wild*. It's a true story about a young man named Christopher McCandless who grew up in a rather dysfunctional family, graduated from Emory University in Atlanta in 1990, was bound for Harvard Law School and decided to chuck it all in a intense and even desperate search for freedom and meaning in his life.

I found myself admiring his tenacity and his willingness to make huge sacrifices for the sake of personal integrity. However, as the story unfolded, I came to realize that this fellow, who renames himself Alexander Supertramp, is on a self-centered journey. One realizes that McCandless lacks spiritual depth in his life. But, because he kept a detailed log of his adventures and his thoughts, we obtain insight into what made him tick. By the end of the story, he is beginning to realize the error of his ways and what he must do to get his life back on track. Sadly, his life comes to a premature ending.

After viewing this film I kept thinking of all the teachings of Jesus that clearly tell us where to find the purpose of life.

*Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself.*

*He who would keep his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake shall surely find it.*

*And what will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and yet loses his own soul?*

*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross.*

Such amazingly simple and yet profound words that tell us exactly how we are to live so that we need not wander through life like this young man only to find the answers too late in life. There is a good reason why the Bible reads the way it does: so that we might truly have life and have it in all its fullness. We once were lost but now are found. Thank God for the wisdom of his everlasting Word!

## Concord

concord@luthersem.edu • (651) 641-3260  
2481 Como Ave. • St. Paul, Minn. 55108

Nicholas Weber—Editor-in-Chief  
Jennifer Lathrop—Production Manager  
Andy Behrendt—Copy Editor  
Katie Fick—Contributing Editor  
Amber Sue Marten—Staff Photographer

The Concord is a monthly publication prepared by students at Luther Seminary, 2481 Como Ave., St. Paul, Minn. 55108, and reflects no official position of Luther Seminary nor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The Concord is distributed in both a print and an electronic format. Copyright 2009-2010, Luther Seminary. All rights reserved. Opinions contained in this publication may not necessarily represent the views of the Concord or of Luther Seminary. Permission is given for the duplication of this publication for the personal use of persons associated with Luther Seminary. No other use is allowed without the expressed written consent of the publisher, Luther Seminary. Questions and comments may be directed to concord@luthersem.edu.

Readers are encouraged to interact with the Concord in a variety of ways. Articles and "Letters to the Editor" are welcomed, as are less formal responses offered through the online version. All submissions should include the author's name, telephone number and, if applicable, class standing. Submissions should be received in our mailbox in the Olson Campus Center (98); at our office, Gullixson 10; or by e-mail. The editor-in-chief reserves the right to publish, edit or disregard all submissions.



# Kicking to victory

## Miranda Hinrichs wins U.S. Open

By Katie Fick  
M.Div. senior

Not every seminarian kicks people in the head on a regular basis. For Miranda Hinrichs, it was a head kick in the third round that won her a gold medal at the U.S. Open, an international taekwondo tournament held Feb. 13 in Las Vegas. She defeated opponents from Sweden, Mexico, Columbia and Uzbekistan to take the win in the female heavyweight division. It was her first international victory.

Hinrichs began taekwondo training in 1989 with her mother, Nancy, in Mount Vernon, Iowa, and now trains in St. Paul and Maple Grove with the World TaeKwonDo Academy, under Master Eui Lee on the Peak Team. Lee is an assistant national team coach for the U.S. and was an assistant coach at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Though Miranda has won national tournaments with this team, she primarily went to the U.S. Open for the sake of her teammates.

"I did not go expecting to win. I wanted to go to support the team and do as well as I could," Hinrichs said. "I feel called to train hard with my teammates and do my best to mentor, love and serve my friends in the WTA family."

Miranda will graduate with her M.Div. from Bethel Seminary this spring but has been doing her Lutheran coursework at Luther

Seminary and will go on internship next year. In addition to her pastoral training, she works with special education students in public schools. Since entering seminary, Miranda has not been able to do taekwondo training as often as she used to but still manages to get to class two to four times a week and enter tournaments occasionally on weekends.

Hinrichs is still working out the ways that her seminary work, pastoral call and taekwondo come together. "It helps me have balance. I get to go work out really hard, and for me, the physical, emotional and spiritual are all very connected ... You've been thinking about a paper all day, and you can go (train) and forget about it for a few hours."

She's also been thinking about what it might mean when she enters congregational life—to use taekwondo as a way of connecting with people in the community, as outreach for youth and families.

Despite such a big accomplishment, Hinrichs is still coming to grips with her U.S. Open win. "I had to take it one match at a time. It was crazy. It hasn't quite set in yet."



# Finding hope in lament

By Karen Treat  
Luther Seminary parish nurse

*Don't forget to welcome strangers. By doing that, some people have welcomed angels without knowing it. —Hebrews 13:2 (New International Reader's Version)*

I try to listen to the music that my teenagers listen to so that when we are in the car they are actually with me and not with the iPod. Last year the music was the Killers; this year it's the Beatles. They have also listened to the group Relient K. For those of you who don't know, this group is a Christian rock band. Some of the music gets pretty rocky to me. I carry on, as any good mother would, and listen to the lyrics amidst the drums and guitars. Some of the music reminds me of psalms of lament. The desperation and longing beat through the song.

As I reflected on feeling lost, one of the songs of Relient K stood out for me.

### "There Was No Thief"

*For a time I thought there was a thief  
among us  
I thought I'd track him down but prior  
to my pursuit  
The smoke had cleared and to my  
disbelief  
There was no thief cause it was me  
That lost you  
  
I guess it's safe to say you're never coming back  
And I understand why you wouldn't want to  
I guess it's up to me to find a way to get to you*

Lyrics, written by artists, are open to interpretation. One of my girls would say the artist in this song is writing for his girlfriend. Another might say he is writing about God.

What I do know is that the words remind us how it is to feel lost. The fear and sorrow felt when we are lost becomes consuming, and we don't believe we can find a way to the solution. In this case and our case, the solution would be God.

We should not be surprised as Christian leaders that we are vulnerable to losing our way. Our pain is found in the Psalms. What the writer in Hebrews reminds us is that there are angels among us. We only need to be open to seeing them. The angel may be your friend, your pastor, a spiritual director or your counselor. Thank God for the blessings that help when we are feeling lost. Praise be to God.



# No truth lost

## A glance at Johnny Cash’s *American VI: Ain’t No Grave*

By Dick Nysse  
Professor of Old Testament

Why listen to the latest posthumous release of Johnny Cash recordings? His health and voice are clearly failing. Is his estate simply milking every last dollar they can from his legacy? Perhaps.

But so what? The truthfulness of these recordings is not dependent on the motives of those making money from them. (I hope, however, that the promise that this is the last will be kept.)

After the death of June Carter Cash in May 2003, Cash spent his final summer recording. (He died Sept. 12, 2003.) *American V: A Hundred Highways* is the previous posthumous release from that summer. On both *V* and *VI* Cash sings songs that express his life and are remarkably reflective in their rendition. Many are covers of songs written by others. Only one out of 10 tracks on this latest CD was composed by Cash (“I Corinthians 15:55”). The compositions of others become vehicles for rendering his own life. The specific details of the lyrics do not need to match the specific details of his biography. The songs are evocative of his life and his view of life. The entire project is an act of truthful imagination. Testimony is not limited by biographical accuracy, but there is no room for lies.

Admittedly, none of the tracks on this CD reach the level of Cash’s performance of Trent Reznor’s “Hurt” on *American IV: The Man Comes Around*, but the range of material selected is wide. The second track is a cover of Sheryl Crow’s “Redemption Day,” and the ninth is “Cool Water,” made famous by the Sons of the Pioneers (1948).

The thread that connects these selections is the awareness of approaching death. The imminence of death forces a glance back and forward. The forward look has expressions of confidence (“There ain’t no grave can hold my body down” and “O death/grave, where is thy sting/victory?”), but these do not become assertions of triumphant certitude. They are placed in the context of petition (“Meet me, Jesus,” and “Give me my task and let me do it right”). Hope is placed in the Redeemer’s beckoning or a band of angels coming. The future beyond the grave is not a ratification of rectitude exerted in this life; there is too much of awareness of hurt, of debts to be collected, of burdening loads to be relieved. Yet there have been good times from which we are severed by death. Regret about losses and hope are in tension; they are not antithetical. The hoped-for future is personal (e.g., reunion with mother and father) but also communal (e.g., the end of war and the “virtues” of pontificating leaders). And yet there is also a sense of not knowing where we are bound. The combination of spirituals, protest songs, love songs and country songs creates a nuanced dialogue that is truthful and not reducible to truism.

These recordings are, in some ways, best received in a tradition that is largely lost in our commercialized and commodified world. Cash makes no claim that these songs were created by him, and yet he sings them as his own. Google the lyrics and then match them to the words Cash actually sings; there are many variations. He takes part in a tradition, not a world locked into adjudicating intellectual property disputes over every phrase or measure. These performances would best fit a world in which the credits simply read “traditional.” The irony is that there might be more individual expression in that world than in ours in which each of us is commanded to be creative. While listening to this CD one can even imagine for a moment that the spirit of Johnny Cash seeks ironically to escape the confines of the commercial interests of his estate.

# \$ervice to God?

By Jerry Hoffman  
Director of the Center for Stewardship Leaders

When you are asked the question, “How much are you worth?” what goes through your mind? Of course, around this community, we have positive theological and biblical affirmations of our worth. After all, we are children of God. But if you are financially worth little, are you lost?

I recall a lunch conversation I had with a broker. He reflected on his belief that people in our culture are paid salaries according to how much they are valued by society. A young man I knew was killed in a car accident. He had just graduated from college. He was not married and had no children. He was planning to go to graduate school, and he was spending the summer working for a minimal salary. During a suit for damages, the defense attorney argued that the settlement to the family for its loss ought to be minimal because he had established very little value.

Is money good or evil? Most people will say it all depends on how money is used. However, Jacques Ellul, a 20th-century theologian, believed that money is a power and principality. Theologically, there are three features tied to this perspective. The first is that money then is not intrinsically evil. God created all the powers. However, the second perspective is that money participates in creation’s fallen nature. As such money is no longer a natural servant of Christ. In fact, money is a rival. Money demands loyalty. As Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” The third perspective is that through the decisive event of the cross and resurrection, the power of money is broken. Christians need no longer be bound by money’s influence.

Much of the power of money is derived from the “monetization of value.” Simply put it means that much of our lives is qualitatively evaluated by financial worth. Money is really a cruel master. One works harder and harder to attain less and less. And then, even if you have money, it is not enough. Ellul wrote: “Surrendering to anxiety and fear and choosing to serve mammon, while perhaps resulting in a measure of material security, further blinds us to the goodness of God, rendering us all the more incapable of placing faith in him. ... Service to money insidiously empties the world of grace. ... It declines our hearts into cynicism and indifference.” (This discussion draws from the 2009 book *Ministry and Money: A Practical Guide for Pastors* by Janet T. Jamieson and Philip D. Jamieson. The quote is from page 48.)

When we serve money, we are lost. In our daily dying to the slavery of money and rising by grace to a new life in Christ, we are free to love God and our neighbors with all we have.



# Lost with maps

By Laura Thompson  
M.A. junior

I have three maps of Iowa in my car. Excessive? Not to a Thompson. Our family loves maps. The world atlas is a common side dish at meals, often next to the casserole, as we look up places from the evening news. You know dessert will wait when Dad’s glasses come off and the atlas goes to the tip of his nose.

The backseat became the navigation center on road trips. Dad would hand us the map, and we told him the routes to get us from rural North Dakota back to Fargo. Barely able to see out the car windows, we learned how to read maps at a young age. Some teenagers get fuzzy dice or even their own wheels to commemorate their entrance into independent driving—Thompsons get a Rand McNally.

Not as visible as the maps but just as prominent was the unspoken rule: Thompsons do not get lost. Knowing your way means planning your destination, planning the most efficient route, planning rest stops and even planning the spontaneity of sightseeing; if the Spirit so moves, plan its arrival around mile marker 127 for Salem Sue, the oversized Holstein. Getting lost was not an option.

Yet I have to wonder—surely this is not just the Thompsons. Look at the world around us. Our atlases have transformed into Google Maps and GPS systems. We seem to have fool-proofed ourselves from the anxiety of being lost. Why? Why must we always know where we’re going? Why our fear of being lost?

It is obvious that we live in a world of efficiency and convenience.

We find the shortest flights and routes, and we complain with delays and setbacks. We are irritated with being inconvenienced, and being lost is the biggest inconvenience. I also see a world where pressure for control is overwhelming and being lost is the reminder of how little we have. So we avoid being lost at all costs, for being lost implies failure, wandering implies uncertainty, journeying implies doubt. And in a world highlighting perfection, being lost is anything but.

But what if we lived lost? I’m pretty sure it’s been done before. Abraham was called to leave the securities of kinship and live wandering as a sojourner. Moses was called to a wilderness without roads or routes. Disciples were called to leave the known and secure and to follow, with no map, no destination. They risked living lost. Were not their lives models of true followers?

I believe we are called to living lost. The life of being fully, holily, horribly and wonderfully lost. Called to live lost in a world absorbed with being found, bound by false and fleeting safety. This lost life is not one of comfort or security, but it is a life faithful to the risk and uncertainty that is faith.

The only times Thompsons used no maps were when we “went for a drive.” Perhaps others know the glory of going nowhere and spending hours driving around the countryside. Packed into the car, we took the roads with no names, turned corners that seemed best and let the setting sun tell us our direction. Where were our maps? Buried underneath us, boosting us up to finally see out the window. These were the drives in which we finally saw where we were going.

# Welcoming our ‘lost’ military men and women

By Kristin Swenson  
M.Div. senior

Coming to seminary was a “lost” experience for me. I came to Luther directly from being on active duty in the Air Force, a culture I had been a part of since graduating from high school, both as a cadet and an officer. Talk about culture shock. About three days into First Week activities, it hit me that no one was checking to see if I was there. There was no attendance, no reporting, no mandatory formation.

I discovered in my first week of classes that chapel was not mandatory, nor was class, really. You didn’t have to march tours over the weekend if you didn’t show up for class. People came in late without having to salute and report in to the instructor. I didn’t even know how to register for classes. As a cadet at the Air Force Academy, I was always told what I was taking and when I was taking it. I was so used to wearing a uniform every day that now I found myself running out of things to wear by Wednesday. I had to go shopping to update my “civilian” wardrobe to make it through the week. The way I understood time even changed, such as 1500 hours now becoming 3 o’clock in the afternoon. I had to learn to adapt my military acronym language in order to “speak civilian” and try to relate my experiences in ways others could understand. Sometimes I didn’t even bother because it would be too hard to translate. It took my entire first semester to adapt, and I’ve continued to find myself a little lost every time I bridge my seminary and Air Force worlds when I come

to and go from reserve chaplain training each summer.

Yet my experiences of feeling lost are minor compared to those of many others among us. We have several veterans and chaplain candidates on our campus who continue to bridge these worlds. We have many more men and women in our communities and congregations who bridge these worlds as they serve our nation in active, reserve or National Guard capacities. They come from deployments or training tours and drill weekends, functioning in the military world, and then return to their civilian communities, jobs and congregations. Many have seen horrors we cannot imagine, endured family separation and loneliness and bear the visible and invisible scars of war. They are reentering a world that seems foreign and disconnected. How are we helping them to be found in the wilderness? Do we take the time to get to know them, hear their stories and create an environment where they feel welcome and appreciated?

There are military men and women in our midst who are lost and seeking love and acceptance. As many of us prepare for public ministry in a variety of capacities, I encourage you to remember them. Follow the example of Jesus, who welcomed the centurion in need of healing for his servant (Matthew 8:5-13). Welcome our servicemen and women who are in desperate need of healing and understanding. May the church be a place where they find acceptance and love as we welcome them as vital members of the community of faith, living out their vocations to protect us and keep us free.



# Not such a big tent

By Chris Brademeyer

M.Div. junior

It has been said that a man who can't stand for something will fall for anything. These words have a certain politically incorrect, bucolic wisdom to them; if one has no principles on which to rest one's feet, what provides a foundation for the rest of his or her life? This has plagued me ever since I reacquainted myself with the ELCA after a several-year hiatus. What do we stand for? I'm not sure that we even know how to ask this question, let alone answer it.

Here at the seminary it is fashionable to throw around certain catch-all answers (like Sunday-school kids answering "Jesus" to everything). These answers follow a few general themes that revolve around "inclusivity," "reaching out to the marginalized," "contextualization," a hyper-sexualized understanding of "perichoresis"; in short, anything that can be construed as remotely involving the community. This focus is truly needed in the church, and it is no doubt a reaction against the radical individualism first taught by the moderns and now by right-wing conservative Christians. What seems so very confusing, however, is how the ELCA's largest seminary goes about showing this welcoming atmosphere on its campus and in its classes.

Many of my more theologically conservative classmates feel that their viewpoints are threatened, not in an academic, healthy way, but in a quasi-fundamentalist intolerance against anything that can be identified as non-"liberal." How is this possible at an institution that prides itself on the numbers of ecumenical, minority and international students that it enrolls? Several of these aforementioned classmates have already left the ELCA due to the intolerance they had felt, and several more have seriously looked into leaving!

Where is the inclusivity for these people? Where is the love we

profess to exhibit to those not in power? We profess to love the "other," but as soon as that other makes itself known, it is swept back into the shadows, and, in our case, we do this in the name of "inclusivity." While reaching out to people who look different than us, we have ignored the people who think differently. This is a pressing issue; people are leaving the ELCA daily over the movements we have made since our inception in the late 1980s. All too frequently, the people who are leaving are the ones who fall into the middle and lower classes, whereas the people who remain are middle to upper class. How is this reaching out to the marginalized?

I have heard classmates and professors speak of a love of all innovative worship methods but express a deep hatred of the rich and varied Western liturgical tradition. We speak of interpreting the Scriptures contextually but often treat "Christian" as a nonfunctional viewpoint for doing this; it is better to be African, feminist, poor, gay, straight, atheist or Jew in this than a regular old Lutheran.

We speak of reaching the poor and making them feel welcome, but the very way we present our liturgical, ecclesial space is unwelcoming to most blue-collar people I know.

We like to be "intentional" about the art that we place in our halls and chapels, but has anyone ever noticed that it is all done in the aesthetic vein of the abstract? I know few uneducated people who appreciate abstract art. Our choices in something as simple as the paintings we display say something about who we are, and coupling our liturgical tastes with our seminary culture of two-faced "inclusivity," we are rightly viewed by many as elitist and uncaring about the general congregational population. If you don't believe me, look around you; people *are* leaving.

# Let he who is without sin cast the first label

By Christopher Heren

M.A. senior

Christians should help serve the marginalized. This is a common and true statement here at Luther Seminary. Christians should give of themselves to serve their neighbor, for this is what love is. Just as Christ gave Himself for us, so we give ourselves for our neighbor, regardless of religion, nation, creed, etc.

What does this statement not mean? Observe the story of the Exodus from Egypt. At Luther Seminary, we read many liberationist theologians when we get to this story. I sympathized as best a white, middle-class male can do in the midst of mutual racial and class stereotyping, but these ideas miss a key part of the passage.

When we think of the story of the Exodus, we like to think of righteous Moses leading

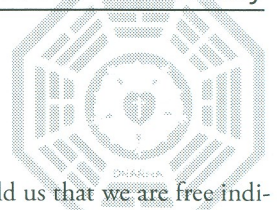
the afflicted Israelites out of Egypt from the wicked Pharaoh. This is all well and good, but missing who the real slaves are demonstrates how truly lost we are. Not only was Israel enslaved, but so was Pharaoh. While Israel was a slave to Pharaoh, he himself was a slave to his own sin and pride. He felt no sympathy for the Israelites and instead was left to ponder why this powerful God favored slaves over his own mighty empire.

We are so geared toward the physical and ethical practice of our faith that we have forgotten what the faith is. Is not the Christian attitude toward sin that it is something that enslaves us and makes us the servants of Satan? Is not the Christian answer to this Christ coming in the flesh to suffer, die and rise for our justification? If this is so, we who have been redeemed by His blood and given the Spirit of adoption by the Father should

never look at Pharaoh as an oppressive monster. We do not see him as we should, namely a poor soul who has been lost to his own greed and evil. We forget that we are sinners and that sin marginalizes everyone, regardless of age, class, sex or even creed. No one is without sin, and thus all are marginalized in some way.

To read Exodus in this way is to treat Pharaoh as the tax collector and ourselves as the Pharisee. We thank God we are not like that oppressive and terrible person who does not have the love of God. In this action, however, we have fallen into the demonic trap. What was so apparent in Luke 18 has hooked us as if we were gullible fish. If we give into this attitude, we can't help but see ourselves as not needing God's grace in Christ because we have elevated ourselves over our neighbor. This would make us truly lost.





# Let the viewer understand

By Matt Skinner

Associate professor of New Testament  
and Andy Root

Assistant professor of Youth and Family  
Ministry

**W**hen they aren't teaching classes, attending meetings and visiting the pedicurist, what do the faculty do? Matt Skinner and Andy Root spend all day, in their offices in the same hallway, sending e-mail to each other about the TV show *Lost*, which they watch religiously. The *Concord* obtained this recent e-mail exchange between the two.

**Skinner:** Why do we watch this show?

**Root:** The thing that got me hooked, and that still keeps me hooked, is how they use time and space in storytelling. I was captivated after my first episode by the ways they moved back and forth from the island with the use of flashbacks. It got cooler in the finale of season 3 when it was a flash forward, and now we're dealing with flash sideways. I find it an interesting way to tell a story (I think in some ways it is a paradigm for preaching). What's even better is that time and space aren't just a device for storytelling but also become a major piece of the story. The way they have used the fluidity of time and space to open up the issues of transcendence and mystery is what I think sets the show apart. I could say more on that ... Late-modern people—oversaturated by mobility, screens, DVRs and social networks that manipulate time—may not be able to distinguish past, present and future as clearly as people once did. (At least, our experience of time and space is different in a digital, globalized world. That is mysterious, forcing us to ask, What is a lifetime, and why do we live it?) But back to you—what hooked you? What was the first big idea that got you thinking?

**Skinner:** I watched the series premiere, shrugged, and didn't watch again until season 2. That year I stumbled onto an episode (I think it was "What Kate Did"), loved it, rented season 1 and never stopped watching. Like you, I think the narration is great, both the jumps across time and all the MacGuffins (especially the books that appear as

props). You also asked about the show's big ideas. I'm drawn to the notion of people's lives being interconnected. I'm less interested in how the show has explored metaphysical causes of those connections. Still, the writers have done great things to highlight the consequences of a person's actions and the ways in which past encounters and events have enormous consequences beyond that individual alone. Also, everyone on the island is "lost" in his or her own unique way, and to see each of them struggle to find renewal or freedom has been great stuff. The show depicts the complexity of that without slipping into either sentimentalism or nihilism. As a result, it has made me care about characters that I'm not especially attracted to (even as it has killed off some of my favorites).

**Root:** I'm drawn to the tension between fate and free will that runs throughout the show. I really love the idea that the island itself is a force in the world, a place where time and space are different, a place where lost people find redemption or damnation. One of my concerns with this season is that the battle between Jacob and the Smoke Monster gets away from the island itself being a force. The storyline that got me was the finale of season 1, when Michael, Sawyer, Jin and Walt were on the boat when for the first time the Others appeared and said, "We're going to have to take the boy." The idea of the Others has been so interesting to me. We rarely know if "others" are hostile or friendly, and there is always fear and possibility when encountering others in our own lives. Like you, I'm also into how each character shows up in others' lives off the island before the crash and now, in this season, in the flash sideways. It raises questions about our networks of social connection. How big are they? What if all those unknown faces were more familiar than we knew? In a time when globalization makes the world one place and we live in faceless societies while things like Facebook connect us in a web of social networks, it is interesting that the show ponders whether the people that we mindlessly interact with or who interact in the background of our lives are actually more constant and may even be major players in the destiny of our lives. All this while

modernity has told us that we are free individuals and that these people are just other free individuals that are background noise to our lives. The show asks, Are these people really just background noise, or might they know something about your very existence that gives you answers to why you exist and what your life is all about? These are the driving questions for many of the characters: What is this place? Why are we here? These are questions most of us ask about our own islands of existence in modernity.

**Skinner:** "Islands of existence"? Easy now, Jean-Paul! Anyway, I'm also not so interested in the struggle between all the opposing forces that show up, from Jacob vs. Smokey to Ben vs. Widmore. For me, the island's "mythology" takes a backseat to the means by which people experience it and respond to it. Viewers see how characters respond to the notion that they have been chosen for something: how they resist this fate (or election?) or respond with either curiosity or demands for more knowledge. I suppose I think theologically in similar ways, beginning with human experience and seeking knowledge of oneself and the world. What does it mean to come to understand that you exist for a purpose beyond yourself and your existence? What is that purpose, and how do we come to discover it? Why was Walt so important or special? Not: What made Walt that way? Rather: How do his gifts affect others? Some of this connects to the fate/free-will question, but it's also about human yearnings and what level of knowledge about what's really "real" an individual is willing to live with. Everyone on the show has issues (who doesn't?), but each understands freedom from those issues or redemption in different ways, which I like. OK—last question: What are you hoping that this final season resolves?

**Root:** There are so many storylines I want solved that it's hard to mention only a few. Why couldn't the Others have babies? Why was Walt too powerful? Why are certain people who weren't on the Others' lists now considered candidates? Who keeps dropping all the food for DHARMA? Why doesn't

Let the viewer to page 8



# Epistle of James

By Kari Aanestad  
M.Div. middler

I have an incredibly addictive personality. I mean, like, super addictive. It doesn't take much for me to not only latch onto but also become completely obsessed with an idea, person, show or inside joke. Some call it flaky or even creepy, but I like to think of it as extreme dedication. For example, I spent the better part of high school secretly photographing people with mullets in preparation for a not-yet-published coffee table book entitled *Coiffure au Coffee*. I'm still awaiting word from Princeton University Press.

My obsessions have been both varied and many, but none has enthralled me as much as my most recent one: James "Sawyer" Ford (or also Jim LaFleur). The ultimate antihero, Sawyer provides fearless leadership with a pinch of humble, self-effacing guilt. His sordid past as a con man brings a flavor of deception to his every present moment, making him entirely emotionally unavailable yet wholly desirable.

I first met Sawyer last winter during a bout of first-year seminary blues. As a remedy, my partner, Brian, and I finally gave in to the *Lost* craze and binged one Saturday. Sixteen hours later I emerged a blurry-eyed Sawyer loyalist.

Now I am not about to argue that Sawyer is a Christ figure, even though there are many good reasons to believe that he is. For example, Sawyer heroically throws himself from a helicopter to create the opportunity for new life in a land to which some have been promised a return. He saves Michael's life while they are adrift on a boat (calming of the sea in Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-40 and Luke 8:22-25). He protects the DHARMA Initiative community as head of security while stuck in 1974 ("While I was with them, I kept them safe ..." John 17:12). He feeds Kate his hard-earned fish biscuit while they're locked in the polar bear cage (feeding 5,000 with fish and loaves in Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:5-15). I could go on, but I won't.

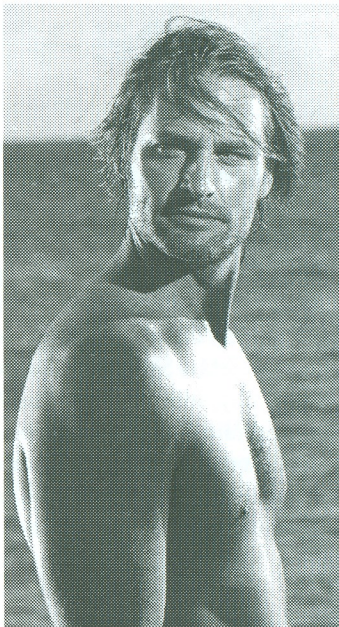
While Sawyer's often ignoble acts disqualify him from ever claiming authentic divinity, he does possess innumerable redemptive qualities. Sawyer's dedication to fine literature, stunning good looks, Southern accent and incredible ability to create only somewhat

offensive nicknames deem him worthy of a following that I can only classify as religious. In other words, though he is not Christ, Sawyer is a god among men.

For example, contrast Sawyer with Dr. Jack Shephard. As a former spinal surgeon with all allure and mystique of the typical tall, dark and handsome, medically trained heartthrob, Jack seems the natural first choice as leader and savior among the plane-wrecked island-dwellers. After enduring his pouty looks and annoying self-destructive tendencies through a mere few episodes, however, one quickly realizes he is saddled with emotional baggage that will ultimately stop him from ever achieving an aim that extends beyond his own concern of self.

Sawyer, on the other hand, embraces a sort of epicurean-philanthropic attitude toward life, as if to say, "I have got nothing to lose but everything to give (so long as you don't know it was me who gave it)." His sense of worth is so low that he selflessly serves others without any concern for how it will improve his standing with anyone. It's very Lutheran of him.

Will Sawyer be the chosen candidate in Jacob's mysterious campaign? Frankly, I do not care. If we're honest with ourselves, we all know that the show will end with nothing resolved and upset fans worldwide. We don't watch *Lost* because we hope it will provide resolution to life's toughest issues; we watch *Lost* because we identify with the hopelessness of being trapped in place with no real answers. Well, there is one real answer: Sawyer is hot. The end.



PRNewswire

Josh Holloway, *Lost*'s James "Sawyer" Ford

## Let the viewer from page 7

Hurley lose weight? What's going to happen to Aaron? (I think he might be Jacob.) What is with Christian Shephard? What is so brilliant is that the show raises all these questions, which in the end all of us do, too. What I mean is that we have more questions about our lives (if we're honest) than we have answers. We live more in questions than answers. Although my own life is more about questions than answers, deeply inside me I still seek the answers, seek the eschatological, which in one way or another will be the

answer to the very questions of my existence. Because the show has trudged this deeply it needs to deliver, and I'm worried (very worried, tossing and turning in bed worried) that it won't, that many of my questions (about the show) will be left unanswered. Pray for me!

**Skinner:** We need a life. As for me, I want all the complexities surrounding Desmond addressed, and I want to learn about the research involving polar bears (let the viewers understand). So many of the main charac-

ters suffer from Daddy Issues. I hope that the show makes something of this. I hope it digs into connections among family, identity and destiny. I'll be disappointed if they have unresolved father issues just because that's a simple way for writers to construct messed-up characters. Whatever happens, they better not give us a *Sopranos*-style exit that pretends to be profound while really just being a lazy exhibition of the show's sense of its own self-importance. Sigh. I guess I still suffer from wounds that TV has inflicted on me.



# 'See you in another life, brother'

By Andy Behrendt

M.Div. senior

As the sun rises on the beach, Jack Shephard is lost in thought. Kate Austen, who until yesterday was his closest friend among the castaways, sits down next to him on the sand. There's an uncomfortable silence as Jack turns his scarred face to her and then returns his gaze to the ocean. Kate summons the courage to speak.

"I want to tell you what I did," she says, "why he was after me." Why the U.S. marshal was accompanying her on the plane and carrying her mug shot.

"I don't want to know," Jack says. "It doesn't matter, Kate—who we were, what we did before this, before the crash. It doesn't really—" He shakes his head as Kate lifts her eyes to the waves. "Three days ago, we all died."

Nodding at the water, he decides his words are true. Maybe even for him. "We should all be able to start over."

Kate turns to him gratefully, takes a deep breath and nods. "OK."

We see them straight on, side by side, both clothed in white, the open world of the island behind them on a new day. We hear the playful strains of a mandolin and the voice of Joe Purdy singing, "I got troubles, Lord, but not today. 'Cause they're gonna wash away. ... And I have sins, Lord, but not today. 'Cause they're gonna wash away. They're gonna wash away."

So ends the third episode of *Lost*, aptly titled "Tabula Rasa." Nothing like a little embedded baptismal imagery to set the tone for one of the more inspired storylines to travel our airwaves.

It's not that *Lost* has been epitomizing Romans 6 each week for the past six seasons, although it *has* offered enough biblical references and "leaps of faith" to supply a seminarian with sermon illustrations for years to come (if only the outlandish premise were easier to explain). It's the sense of mystery and the honest portrayal of human experiences despite the fantasy—especially experiences of brokenness and redemption—that have made the show worthy of theological attention.

*Lost* has repeatedly depicted people looking to start over—on the island, off the island, back on the island, in an entirely different reality—often because of their sins or the sins of others.

There's John Locke, an unremarkable man, so rejected or betrayed by almost everyone he

ever really trusted or believed in that he is left paralyzed from the waist down and without a sense of purpose or meaning. But, suddenly able to walk through a sort of mystical communion with the island, the self-described "man of faith" is given a new destiny and then another, punctuated by periods of doubt and despair.

There's Ben Linus, the murderous master manipulator (introduced while pretending to be a marooned hot-air balloonist from Wayzata) who was only brought to his knees this season after he himself was manipulated into murdering the godlike Jacob, whom he blamed for his life of costly, thankless discipleship. One of the series' best scenes came weeks ago with Ben pointing a rifle at Ilana, a fellow disciple who has vowed to kill him for his treason—not to kill her first but to express his remorse with tears and trembling. He tells her he's fleeing to the very one who manipulated him "because he's the only one that'll have me." Startlingly, Ilana announces, "I'll have you," and leads him to the door of redemption.

Then there's Jack, the shepherd who's as flawed as he is heroic. A spinal surgeon with a compulsion to fix things, he spends half the series trying to shepherd the castaways off the island. When he succeeds and finally receives the new start he has strived for, he squanders it and becomes an addict on the verge of suicide. He only regains hope by leading the returned castaways into another new beginning back on the island. As he later explains, "I came back here because I was broken, and I was stupid enough to think this place could fix me." With that, Jack selflessly—and self-destructively—executes a plan to detonate a hydrogen bomb decades before the plane crash to change history so that those who died under his watch will have a new life in a new reality.

The big twist that establishes *Lost*'s final season is that the explosive sacrifice succeeds in creating that new reality—a "sideways" reality where the dead are alive and the characters so far seem to have an overall more heavenly and saintly existence. They've been reborn, dead to the life they had in the original reality. But, to their surprise, Jack, Kate and the others who blew the bomb also still exist in the old reality, and they're the same lost souls they've always been, still in need of redemption.

Call it *simul sideways*. Come to think of it, through a Lutheran lens, *Lost* might not be so farfetched after all.

## Lost Faith

"It's a fine line between denial and faith. It's much better on my side."

—Rose (clutching her husband's wedding ring), to Charlie, in "Whatever the Case May Be"

"I understand that you live in a world where righteousness and evil seem very far apart, but that is not the real world."

—Eko, to Yemi, in "The 23rd Psalm"

"You say there isn't any purpose—there's no such thing as fate. But you saved my life, brother, so that I could save yours. ... I'm sorry for whatever happened that made you stop believing, but it's all real."

—Desmond, to Locke, in "Live Together, Die Alone"

"Thomas the Apostle. When Jesus wanted to return to Judea, knowing that he would probably be murdered there, Thomas said to the others, 'Let us also go, that we might die with him.' But Thomas was not remembered for this bravery. His claim to fame came later, when he refused to acknowledge the resurrection. He just couldn't wrap his mind around it. The story goes that he needed to touch Jesus' wounds to be convinced. ... Of course he was. We're all convinced sooner or later, Jack."

—Ben, to Jack, in "316"

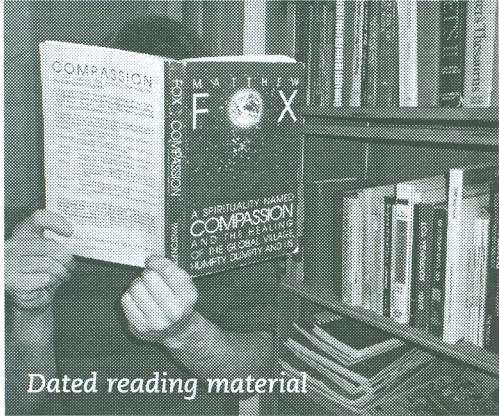




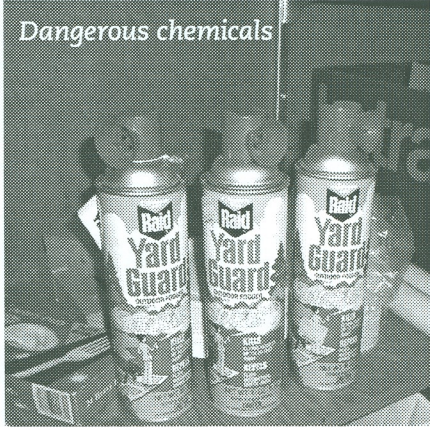


# The Concord office: Lost DHARMA Initiative station?

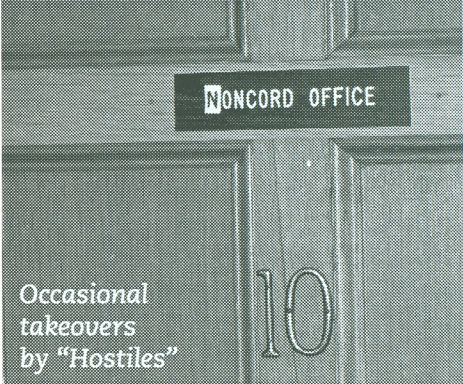
Take a look beneath Gullixson Hall and decide for yourself!



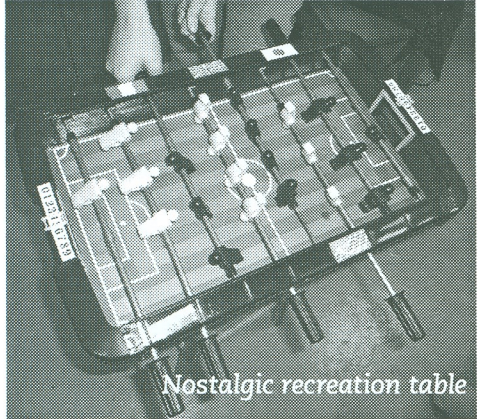
Dated reading material



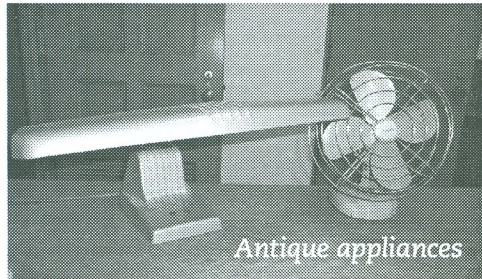
Dangerous chemicals



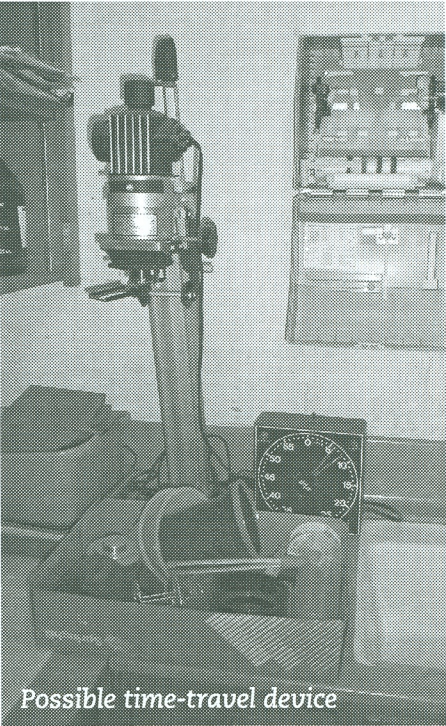
Occasional takeovers by "Hostiles"



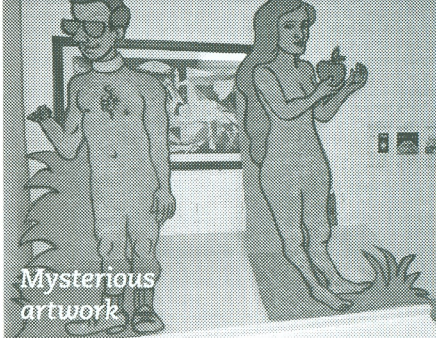
Nostalgic recreation table



Antique appliances



Possible time-travel device



Mysterious artwork



Record player and collection



The Eternal Present

# Lost without answers

By Katie Fick

M.Div. senior

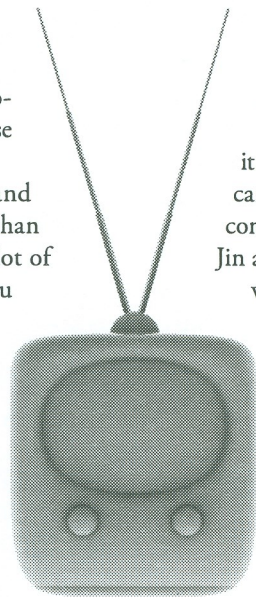
I am a *Lost* fan by marriage. If Norbert, my husband, was not an avid watcher of the show, I would have stopped watching it years ago.

In the beginning, I liked *Lost* as much as he did. I enjoy shows where there is a mix of characters I like (Jin, Sun, Hurley, Locke, Sayid) and characters that annoy me (Kate, Jack, Charlie). It usually means they are written well. And I like shows that have mysteries and mythologies, things just below the surface and the ability to surprise me. All good stuff.

But my attention began to wane as time went on and there began to be a trend of more questions being raised than answers, along with episodes where there would be a lot of flashbacks and not much going on in real time. Thus you might have a nice back story on a character, but what happened in real time was ... they walked across the island. I became increasingly frustrated waiting for the story to progress, but when the story did move forward and deal with some questions (Who are the Others? What is the monster?), it just left more questions in its wake. The Others are ... a group of people who live on the island. It appears that until recently they lived at the temple, although some of them used to live in the old DHARMA barracks. The monster? It's some guy. Made of smoke who can flash pictures and kill people. Some very old, very angry guy. Glad all that got cleared up.

This is the madness that is *Lost*. As a person who loves mysteries, who enjoys not having all the answers, I discovered that I can only handle them in small doses. I've stated in this column before that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Veronica Mars* were two of my favorite shows, and I'm realizing that one of the main reasons why is that they had season-long mysteries. Want to know who killed Lilly Kane? If you were a *Veronica* fan, you'd start caring who in September, and you'd know by May. On *Lost*, if you wanted to know why Locke was in a wheelchair? You had to keep watching for three years to find out. Frankly, I don't have that kind of patience. This is why I love books—I control the pace of discovery. But I'll never forget reading Tana French's *In the Woods* until 3 a.m. to finish it, only to find that she concludes her mystery novel by only solving one of the mysteries. The other mystery of the book, the one we really care about, because it involves the past of the main character? We get to the very edge of discovering, and then it's snatched away. The reader is left hanging. That is the angriest I've ever been at 3 o'clock in the morning. French has said that she may write another book that answers the mystery. She left me wondering if she even knows what happened herself.

*Lost* has been similarly frustrating to me. But, because we have one television and it happens to be in the room I study in, I have kept up with the show and now have a different feeling toward it. First of all, it introduced some characters that have become some of my



favorites—especially Ben Linus, the murdering, conniving and tragic former leader of the Others. Second, I have let go of wanting the show to answer the mythological questions it leaves in its wake, and I've decided to focus more on the characters and the redemption stories that the show is telling for each of them. Who or what is Jacob? Who is currently wearing a dead Locke suit? Why did the Others kidnap Walt? Why does the island have a giant wheel that can move it through time? Don't care anymore. And I'm not even touching the whole space-time-continuum/flash-sideways business. Mythology, you're dead to me.

But I do want to know if Sayid can be redeemed, now that it has been revealed that no matter what "universe" he's in, he cannot escape being a killer. Perhaps his redemption will only come in laying down his life for his friends. I want to know if Jin and Sun can finally reunite and raise their child together. I want to know if Claire can ever be reunited with Aaron. I want to know if Ben can find a place where he feels at home. Hurley is finally emerging as a leader—what will be his final fate? Will Sawyer meet up with Juliet in the sideways world? Where is Desmond? What happened to Rose and Bernard? These are the things I want to know—about the characters, not about all the science fiction, the good-vs.-evil battle brewing around them. Oh, and I still find Kate and Jack super-annoying and would be satisfied if they went off on a hike through the jungle and were never mentioned again.

I suppose that's what makes a good TV show—not all the bells and whistles of plot, which is important, but the characters. That's probably why I've been able to stick with *Lost* but refused to be present when *Ghost Hunters International* was on in my household. In a way, that's what to me is most important in our lives—not necessarily everything that happens but who is with us on the journey.

Next month ...

## SO HOW'S IT GOING?

Sometimes seminarians get so busy there isn't much time for reflection. What have you learned at Luther (or on internship) this year? How were your classes? How do you feel the seminary is preparing you for future ministry? What parts of our education do you think are done well, and what needs improvement? We want to hear what you think! Articles are due **Thursday, April 15, at noon.**

Send submissions to [concord@luthersem.edu](mailto:concord@luthersem.edu).

Pay rate is \$15 for articles less than half a page (of Concord space) and \$30 per article a half-page or larger.



The Concord asks...

## What was the last thing you lost?



"I lost a set of gloves."

—Eric Smith,  
friend of M.Th.  
student Javen  
Swanson

"It's not lost, but I miss my family (in Madagascar)."

—Denis  
Rakotozafy,  
M.A. junior



"My sanity."

—Rolf Jacobson,  
associate  
professor of  
Old Testament

"My marbles."

—Aimee Appell,  
M.Div. senior



"Legos."

—Della Christ,  
daughter of  
M.Div. middler  
Peter Christ

"My cell phone. I lose it all the time."

—Mollie Dvorak,  
M.Div. senior



# eat YOUR Way Through the Twin Cities

By Katie Fick

M.Div. senior

There is blatant hypocrisy in my restaurant reviewing. For years I have been teasing *Concord* food reviewers for going to restaurants they have been to before—after all, where's the adventure when you already know you like the food? But when it came time for me to review again, I had no choice but to choose India Palace. I had not been to my favorite Indian restaurant in six months! I'm not made of stone!

On the outside, India Palace's Roseville location (they now also have restaurants in Plymouth, Burnsville and Woodbury) doesn't look like much—the building used to be occupied by a Happy Chef. But inside they have added some Indian art and trim to make the place homier. Yet the main attraction is the food—delicious curries, tasty Naan (the garlic is my favorite) and refreshing drinks. A few at our table enjoyed the Mango juice, but the Mango Lassi is the big attraction for me—the fresh taste of mango and yogurt makes this drink a nice counterpoint to a spicy dish.

For me, India Palace is all about the Rogan Josh, a lamb curry with spicy yogurt sauce. When I let my tablemates sample it, the remarks included "It's so *smooth*" and "You have to write down the name of that for me." Others had curries ranging from Lamb Vindaloo, a tangy lamb and potato dish, to Chicken Saag, which is for spinach lovers. No one ordered any of the Tandoori dishes—items baked in a special Indian clay oven—but others I've eaten with have enjoyed these as well. Everyone enjoyed their dishes—the pickiest eater of the bunch wiped his plate clean!

One also chooses a level of spice when ordering a dish—once upon a time I ordered the Rogan Josh "mild," but that has been changed to "American medium," a good thing, I'm told, since one of my dish samplers said it wasn't "American mild." My dish had a spicy flavor that didn't overwhelm the taste buds. Most people at the table ordered their dishes medium, but the African at our table wanted his Chicken Chilli as hot as they could make it. Sadly they would only make his dish at "Level 1" of their hottest dishes, we were told because they were concerned about killing him. When he informed them that while his dish was good it was not nearly hot enough, they promised to up the level of spiciness next time. So be warned—if you want India Palace's hottest dishes, you have to earn them.

Overall, prices at India Palace are reasonable for what you get; dishes range from \$10 to \$15, and all but one of us took food home for leftovers. They do have a lunch buffet, but I've never been impressed when I've gone there for it. They also do not have a children's menu or activities for kids, so keep this in mind for family visits. But if you want to enjoy a savory, spicy meal in a relaxing atmosphere, India Palace is the place for you!

Up next: *T's Place* (featuring Ethiopian-Malaysian fusion), 2713 E. Lake St., Minneapolis. Hosted by Elizabeth Flomo. Friday, April 9; meet in Olson Campus Center at 5:30 p.m.

## India Palace

2570 Cleveland Ave. N.,  
Roseville

(651) 631-1222

[www.indiapalacemn.com](http://www.indiapalacemn.com)